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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004480

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENTARY ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSES IRAQ'S
SITUATION WITH CODEL SHAYS

Classified By: (U) Classified by Political Counselor Margaret
Scobey, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C). SUMMARY. CODEL Shays met December 3 with a roundtable of Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR) members that included all major political blocs. Member reactions and recommendations to the current situation largely fell along sectarian and party lines. Sunni Arab Tawafuq members complained of discrimination and the lack of real participation, while a leading secular Iraqiyya member bemoaned the lack of support for liberal secular movements. A Shia Independent said the main problem is terrorism and expressed his hope that the U.S. military can help the GOI get rid of it. A leading Shiite Fadhila member described the current problem as political, not governmental or organizational. He said the problems would remain even if the government were changed. A Kurdish bloc member stated that although the Kurds bore no role in the sectarian violence plaguing Iraq, all Iraqis need to work together as an internal front and cooperate to solve the serious problems facing the country. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) CODEL Shays met December 3 with a roundtable of Council of Representatives (CoR) members: Abd al-Khalaq al-Zangana (Kurdish Alliance/KDP), Hassan al-Shemmari (Shia Coalition/Fadhila), Safia al-Suhail (Iraqiyya), Dr. Ala Mekki (Tawafuq/IIP), Taha Khudayr al-Luhaiby (Tawafuq/National Dialogue Council), Amer Thamer Ali (Shia Coalition/Independent), and Ablahad Sawa (Kurdish Alliance/Chaldean Democratic Union Party).

Sunni Arabs List Complaints/Suggestions

13. (C) Al-Luhaiby listed four main problems for the Sunni Arabs: (a) Sunnis feel the demographic statistics are not correct. He claimed that the ration card system indicates that 40 percent of Iraqis are Sunnis; (b) Sunnis entered the political process to stop the killing, but there has been no opportunity for real participation, in particular, he bemoaned the lack of a Sunni "sovereign" ministry; (c) since 2003, he alleged that no construction or reconstruction projects have taken place in Sunni areas; and (d) Sunnis as a group have been branded as "takfiris," (those who call others infidels) even though they are supported by both Shiite Iran and Sunni Syria.

14. (C) Dr. Ala Mekki said his Iraqi Islamic Party was involved in the political process from the beginning and agreed to the government's political program and national reconciliation initiative. However, with the passing of time, these two programs have produced no results on the ground. He bemoaned the (a) the lack of security (burning of mosques and kidnappings) and militia violence; (b) infiltration of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF); (c) lack of

basic essential services; (d) sectarianism in the ministries; and (e) intervention of the PM to stop violence in some (Shiite) areas while supporting military operations in others (Sunni areas).

¶15. (C) While critical of the PM's performance, Mekki expressed his belief that PM Maliki has good intentions, and that he is trying hard to make change. Mekki made four main suggestions: (a) all government personnel pledge to work against violence or incitement of violence and if they violate the pledge, that they be removed from their positions; (b) appointment of technocrats to security and essential service ministries; (c) halting the displacement of people from certain areas; and (d) bringing militia members who commit violence to justice.

Shia Coalition Viewpoints

¶16. (C) Shia Independent Amer Thamer Ali told CODEL Shays that the Shia were denied all of their rights under the previous regime, but that they have participated in the political process and work with all sides now. He said the main problem is terrorism. He expressed his hope that the U.S. military can help the GOI get rid of terrorism and said Iraq needs U.S. help in the security area. Leading Fadhila member Hassan al-Shemmari described the current problem as political, not governmental or organizational. He criticized the sectarian basis of political process, saying it should have been based on the interests of Iraq as a whole. As such, Shemmari argued, the problems that plague Iraqi politics would remain even if the government were changed. There are political struggles and problems between the various Iraqi,

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regional states, and international powers - and until now, no political solution has been found.

Secularist Decries Current State of Iraq

¶17. (C) Leading Iraqiyya member Safia al-Suhail said the removal of Saddam Hussein was a great victory for democratic change. She bemoaned the fact that the international community had defined the Coalition presence as occupiers, not liberators. Safia defined all the violence that has ensued as resistance, fueled and supported by neighboring countries (with a view toward "liberating Iraq"). The problem of sectarian violence, she continued, is caused by the support of armed groups from these neighboring countries. She said sectarian quotas and the absence of a national citizenship have exacerbated the violence. She highlighted the politicization of religion as a main problem and the lack of support for secular liberal movements. There is no citizen state based on institutions, and no accountability. She recommended that (a) whoever commits wrongs needs to be held accountable; (b) neighboring countries need to be pressured not to interfere in Iraq and to stop supporting sectarian groups; (c) support for inclusive citizen state be increased; and (d) participation of women be increased.

Kurds: We Are Not Involved in Sectarian Dispute, But We Support Reconciliation

¶18. (C) Abd al-Khalaq al-Zangana (KDP) highlighted the problem that all of the main parties in Iraq feel they are unjustly treated and that a lack of trust exists between them - although he maintained the Kurds are not involved in the sectarian dispute. He added that people need to accept that the one party, one sect, one nation rule is gone and that there are serious problems that require all Iraqis to work together and cooperate. The main component of this is an

internal front with the support of international and regional countries.

COMMENT

[19](#). (C) The member statements and recommendations fell largely along party and sectarian lines and revealed how stark the difference in viewpoints between them can be. Despite this, there was genuine collegiality and respect among the various CoR members and broad agreement that Iraqis themselves need to overcome their internal political and sectarian differences to deal with the serious issues confronting the nation.
Khalilzad